

# WELLCOME LIBRARY LEARNING RESOURCE



## GCSE HISTORY MEDICINE THROUGH TIME TEACHERS' NOTES

### Why was Simpson experimenting with chemical anaesthetics in 1847?

This section focuses on a key factor in the development of surgery – anaesthetics – as a means of examining how science has changed medicine, but also to investigate the nature of another key concept in the Medicine Through Time course: turning-points.

Pain had always been a major problem inhibiting developments in surgery. Obviously anaesthetics were needed, but why was Simpson experimenting with chloroform in 1847; why not somebody else at another time, earlier or later?

The material in this section reveals that science was entering a time of tremendous importance at this point in the 19th century, and that chemistry was the key science (later both physics and biology had their peak moments). Several gases and other chemicals (chloroform is a vapour, not a gas) were experimented with in order to establish their properties. Anaesthesia was a useful by-product of these investigations.

#### WEBSITES

##### Short biographies of Simpson:

[www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/people/famousfirst60.html](http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/people/famousfirst60.html)

[www.whonamedit.com/doctor.cfm/2532.html](http://www.whonamedit.com/doctor.cfm/2532.html)

[www.electricscotland.com/history/other/simpson\\_james.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/simpson_james.htm)

#### GENERAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE LINKS

##### History of Medicine information by period:

[www.historylearningsite.co.uk/history\\_of\\_medicine.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/history_of_medicine.htm)

##### Images:

[http://www.wihm.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/gw\\_44\\_3/chameleon?skin.nlm](http://www.wihm.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/gw_44_3/chameleon?skin.nlm)

<http://medphoto.wellcome.ac.uk>

##### Gateway site:

<http://medhist.ac.uk>

##### Timeline:

[www.schoolscience.co.uk/content/4/biology/abpi/history/timeline.html](http://www.schoolscience.co.uk/content/4/biology/abpi/history/timeline.html)

[www.schoolshistory.org.uk/medicine.htm](http://www.schoolshistory.org.uk/medicine.htm)